

The Ballarat Naturalist

November 2007



Trailing Goodenia
Goodenia lanata
(Club Logo)

TERRICK TERRICK NATIONAL PARK. . . OCTOBER 15-18 2007

Terrick Terrick NP is 60 km north of Bendigo, just outside Mitiamo. First gazetted as a state park, it became a National Park in 1998 when the neighbouring sheep grazing property of 1277ha was added. Further expansion in 2002 enlarged the park to 3880 ha. Today it contains the largest significant remnant of White Cypress Pine in Victoria, wooded and open grasslands which are home to the Plains Wanderer, and sections of Box-Ironbark woodland, Grey and Yellow Box predominating.

Protruding from the flat to gently sloping pine stands and grassy plains are three granite massifs topped by tors. The granite is coarse and contains large plagioclase phenocrysts. We explored some of these areas and found the Snowy Mint-bush *Prostanthera nivea* in full bloom, and, strictly limited to the joints and cracks in the granite, Tufted Bluebell *Wahlenbergia graniticola* which formed most attractive clumps. Its roots emerged from the damp crevices where the granite was exfoliating. Where the granite had weathered along joints, deep depressions had formed containing water and apparently these were known to the local Aborigines. Swamp wallabies were sighted among the rocks.

The camping area is clearly defined below Mt Terrick Terrick and caters only for bush camping and day visitors, with a composting toilet the only facility. No camp fires are permitted and there's no water so we had to be self sufficient. As we were there on weekdays we had the area to ourselves, and waking to the dawn chorus was brilliant as the sun rose and gradually touched the tops of the pines.

Kathy, an involved member of BOCA, counted 40-odd species of birds over the 3 days and because she knew her bird calls and what was likely to be found there, was an invaluable guide. Birds which appealed to me were Hooded Robin, Red-capped Robin, White-browed Babbler, nesting Choughs, Peaceful Dove and Rainbow Bee-eaters. Kathy heard and successfully stalked Gilbert's Whistler, and Rufous Whistlers were in full song all round the camp. Brown Tree-creepers were ubiquitous. Yellow-rumped and Chestnut-rumped Thornbills flitted around



Waterhole and Tufted Bluebells

the mixed pine-gum woodlands with Superb Fairy Wrens. A Little Eagle was identified.

Other flowers included Wiry Buttons *Leptorhynchos tenuifolius* and Common Everlasting *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, and Ptilotus species – Feather-heads *P. macrocephalus* and Rabbit-tails *P. seminudus* were abundant. Carpets of a small white daisy and a groundsel were widespread but we couldn't work out what they were. Close inspection of the dry ground revealed quite a variety of plants but unless they are in flower I'm useless! The eucalypts had plenty of spouts and hollows – we watched a Striated Pardalote disappear into one and heard the chicks. Plenty of dead branches were lying about.

The grazing property contains an old homestead which is in a state of disrepair but also modern outbuildings as sheep are still kept at a light stocking level to keep the grasslands in suitable condition for the rare Plains Wanderer, a quail-like bird. On the way there we surprised two bearded dragons soaking up the sun on the road, both yellow-green and a perfect match for the grasslands. Hares were sighted and interesting to watch, and Eastern Grey Kangaroos traversed the lower areas. Rabbits were common, unfortunately, with warrens causing erosion.

This park caters for the keen naturalist able to be self-sufficient. Camping is free but you are asked to inform the ranger at Kerang of your plans.

Carol Hall

OCTOBER EXCURSION REPORT

Our October 14th excursion was to Maryborough via some en route stops. When this trip was originally planned it was after a SEANA campout experience of reasonably prolific spring wildflowers. Continued drought altered our initial ideas so we included some social history as well as natural history. We began at Miner's Rest wetland reserve seeking the endangered/rare Stiff Groundsel (*Senecio behrianus*). We may have found it – flowers would assist identification. A repeat visit is needed. Ibis were seen – white and straw necked.

Talbot was next for a short break before turning into Pollocks Road to revisit the 700 year old River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) used by Aboriginal women of the Jajowurrong clans as sheltering place to give birth. It is an impressive old giant in many ways, not the least of which are the regenerated young

trees – viable seed from such an old tree – apt that it is called the maternity tree. It is classified by the National Trust of Victoria.

We continued along this gravel road lined by mature trees with an understorey of bright yellow *Acacia paradoxa*. Birds were about – galahs, magpies and small, fast ones. A quiet watching time would probably be rewarding – grassland, trees and shrubs – a good variety of habitats.

A right turn into Possum Gully Road and another into Mudbrick Road Track were next. Morning tea was enjoyed within the residual mud brick wall built by the Brogan family (James and Harriette) about 18???. We later learned that the wall was topped with a wire fence and enclosed a vegetable garden. A small mudbrick home housed a family of 6 – 8 and grandparents. It is now so dry that we were amazed that people could live there. Gold was the lure then. Vegetables were sold to surrounding miners. The wall is impressive – visit if you can. The drab, dry bush was brightened by a good look at a male mistletoe bird feeding and flitting in a clump of mistletoe (*Amyema miquelii*) above us.

Back to Possum Gully Road briefly before a stop at wells dug by Aborigines. These are at the base of a small rock ledge which would channel water into the holes. They are neglected now but would probably function again if cleaned out and if rain actually fell. A couple of Pink fingers (*Caladenia carnea*) were found amongst the crunchy litter.

We skirted Paddy's Ranges and drove to Maryborough. Peter and I recently prowled the park but found the drought has been harsh. At the Tourist Information Centre we were told about the Brogans, the Welcome Stranger nugget and Foley's bridge. We plan to find this bridge one day.

Next was into Craigie State Forest to Battery Dam Reserve and lunch. This area is covered with evidence of gold mining and has been developed for visitors with picnic facilities, smooth paths among relics and interpretation panels to explain cyanide vats, puddling machines, mining procedures and an early home. Birds were calling and seen while we enjoyed a beautiful day at a table beside a 250 year old Grey box (*Eucalyptus macrocarpa*). Other trees are Red ironbark (*Eucalyptus tricarpa*), Yellow gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*) and Red box (*Eucalyptus polyathemos*). We noted striated pardalote, welcome swallow, red wattlebird, raven, willy wagtail, grey currawong and grey strike-thrush.

After the gold had been gained and reworked at least twice the next use of this area was distilling eucalyptus oil. This began in 1917 and continued until the 1950s. This now abandoned industry can be understood by reasonably intact remains of boilers, vats, channels and interpretation signs. Flowers were scarce but the area is interesting and pleasant.

After lunch we walked the 2km return track to Bull Gully rockwells. Most of the track sides were dry but we found a patch which is better watered because of the terrain and were pleased to find some flowers. In case it reads that the patch was lush, the truth was we found scattered plants, most smaller than usual and some looking like they were just surviving, especially a couple of *Grevillea alpina*

plants with few leaves and even fewer flowers. We found waxlip orchids (*Glossodia major*), Hooded caladenia, previously *Caladenia cucullata* and now *Stegostylis cucullata*, twining fringe lily (*Thysanotus patersonii*), black-anther flax lily (*Dianella revoluta*), sticky everlasting (*Xerochrysum bicosum*), daphne heath (*Brachyloma daphnoides*), milkmaids (*Burchardia umbellata*), early Nancy (*Wurmbea dioica*), yam daisy (*Microseris scapigera*), pink bells (*Tetratheca ciliata*), common rice flower (*Pimelea humilis*), a spent tall greenhood (*Pterostylis melagramma*), gold dust wattle (*Acacia acinacea*), a lomandra and a sun orchid bud.

At the rock wells Peter read an extract from the Maryborough Field Naturalists book “50 Golden Years”. This recounts the drawn out process of securing the permanent protection of these wells and the 200 pound payment the club made to erect a sturdy fence in 1964. The fence has also protected plants so a mini garden now decorates the wells. A rock “cliff” backs the wells which have a capacity of 168 litres. The holes at the top are deceptive; they go down more than a metre and are linked below ground. Once they would have been covered to reduce loss and keep the water clean. We were pleased to admire at least six yellow-tufted honeyeaters flying about but as we were about to walk away we noticed that the birds were coming to the wire fence. We stopped and watched and soon realised the birds were going in to drink. We were initially doubtful but observation proved they were really going into the holes. A very old man-made facility still being used. Well done to Maryborough Field Naturalists for safeguarding this site, said to be among the best aboriginal rock wells in Victoria.

On the return walk we saw a Purplish beard orchid (*Calochilus robertsonii*), a grey everlasting and an orange pea plant and the Goldfields grevillea (*Grevillea dryophylla*). Afternoon tea back at Battery dam completed our day before the drive back along the Dunach-Mt Eddington Road.

Claire Dalman

COMMENTING ON PROPOSED GOVERNMENT PLANS

In the September 2007 Australian Plants Society publication “Growing Australia” (Vol 51.2, No 201) Ern and Lesley Perkins from Castlemaine had an article titled “Research Report”. They discuss the development of government plans that impact on the natural environment such as controlled burning and firewood collection. Ern and Lesley say that “When comments about management are invited, it seems that the majority of responses are from those wishing to use the forest for things such as prospecting, timber getting, and honey collection. It is important that those who want a greater emphasis on conservation should make

their views known. There should be a proper balance between conservation and utilisation of forest resources.”

Recently people in Ballarat have been invited to comment on various strategies and plans. One of particular interest recently has been the “Midland Fire District Fire Operations Plan” and in particular the intention for a controlled burn at Mt Beckworth. Apparently this has been proposed as an ecological burn to encourage orchids. Our club’s position is that this does not consider the impact on bird life as this place is a good bird habitat and burning may reduce nesting sites and feeding areas. Lesley and Ern refer to the difficulty commenting on draft plans where there is little research. Their interest is the box –ironbark forest but the same might be said about the effect of fire on birds and animals as indicated by Dr. Alan York’s talk.

If the environment is to be kept at the forefront it is important that we all make our concerns known and put our individual understanding. Lesley and Ern comment that a brief personal letter can be much better than sending a signed pro-forma submission.

Peter Dalman

THE PILBARA AND NORTHWARDS – MICHAEL MARMACH

We knew were in for a visual treat as we watched Michael Marmach set up for his presentation. There were two large screens and two projectors on purpose built stands all carefully aligned using a selection of spacers with the controls to the projectors fixed together. Not the sort of thing one offered to help with. In all there were eight cassettes of slides, four to each projector.

Michael had visited the Pilbara and parks to the north including Karijini National Park and the Hamersley Range.

Using panoramas taken with two slides carefully aligned and projected simultaneously side by side, Michael took us on a tour of the north west of Australia. When compared with normal slides, his technique made it feel like you were immersed in the landscape as his panoramas swept across his dual screens. His images, mostly taken early or late in the day when the light was at its best for photography were visually stunning and accompanied by an explanation of the vegetation and natural history. His knowledge of the names and nature of the plants in the photographs was inspiring and added considerably to the interest of the presentation.

The panoramas showed typical geography of the areas visited with vistas of sparsely vegetated valleys and hills but also including waterways such as the Murchison River with its deeply eroded gullies. Michael had walked along ridges and to a small lagoon in the Murchison to capture his images of this area. There were slides showing masses of daisy flowers including the poached egg daisy, expanses of spinifex and vivid images of trees known as snappy gums because of

their tendency to drop limbs. These trees showed beautifully against dark rock backgrounds. Several images included a restored old camel route reminding us of this early form of transport.

All the photographs conveyed images of a pristine, rugged environment largely devoid of man's influence. Michael's explanation of his travels and camps added to the enjoyable evening. The number of brilliant images was amazing making the viewer feel they had already been to the area but also providing inspiration for travel. Michael is truly a gifted photographer who has mastered a unique technique for presenting stunning images.

Peter Dalman

Minutes of the General Meeting of the Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat Inc

ABN 13 150 403 135; Inc No A0014919P

Held at the Ballarat Horticulture Centre on the 14th October 2007.

The President opened the meeting and welcomed 25 members and visitors.

Apologies were received from Nina Netherway, John Morrish, Genni Binns and Helen Burgess. Accepted on the motion of Peter Billing, seconded Tony Wilson.

Minutes of previous meeting: .Confirmed Chris Baulch, seconded Bill Murphy.

Business Arising from previous Meeting.

Herbarium: Bill Murphy has photographed each of the 1100 herbarium specimens and these will be stored on DVD. Bill Murphy, his daughter Marg, Claire & Peter Dalman, will deliver the herbarium to the Melbourne Herbarium on 24 October.

Correspondence.

IN:

- Geelong Naturalist, Bendigo: Whirrakee, Castlemaine Naturalist, FNC Field Nats News, Trust for Nature: Conservation Bulletin, September 2007, DSE: Land for Wildlife News, August 2007.
- Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria: Newsletter, Spring 2007; Application form for Public Liability Insurance.
- SMB: Room Hire.
- City of Ballarat: Australia Day Awards; Mayor unable to attend SBML but Cr Herman Ruyg will attend.
- Catherine King: Acceptance Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture, Irene Hooper: Apology
- Bush Heritage Australia: Appeal.
- Bendigo Bank: Statement.
- Northern Territory Field Naturalists Club: ANN 2008 second notice.
- Australians for Refunds on Cans and Bottles: Register of community groups.
- Enfield Forest Alliance: Clean up day, Sunday 4 November.

OUT:

- Various: Invitations to Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture.
- Corangamite CMA: Certificate V Business/Governance expression of interest.
- City of Ballarat: Improvements to Lake Wendouree.

Moved: Ken McDonnell; Seconded: Ken Hammond. Carried.

Business Arising from correspondence:

Australians for Refunds on Cans and Bottles: That Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat supports the introduction of a container deposit system in Victoria and will register on the list of community groups compiled by Australians for Refunds on Cans and Bottles. . . Moved:

Paul Norquay; seconded Gavin Cerini. Carried

Reports

Treasurer's Report: Opening balance \$4362.96, Income \$60.00, Expenses \$148.50, Closing balance: \$4274.46. Moved L. Hanrahan; Seconded: G. Binns. Carried.

Improvements to Lake Wendouree: John Gregurke attended a meeting with Ballarat City Council officers to discuss this issue. Proposals to clear willows on island near hatchery pump house, and towards Convent Corner and replant with native plants, were presented by council. This was seen to destroy the existing bird habitat. A compromise was discussed which included leaving old and fallen trees as perches for birds, close planting of *Poa* and shrubs along lake edge, no major removal of willows until new plantings become dense enough to provide habitat for small birds. Any work done should proceed in stages so that habitat for birds is retained.

Victorian Trail-bike Strategy: Peter Dalman attended a meeting, organised by DSE, attended by a wide range of interest groups. Working in mixed groups issues associated with trail-bike use and strategies to overcome problems were identified.

General Business

- Claire Dalman volunteered to write the excursion report.
- Syllabus: Members were invited to contribute suggestions for speakers and excursions for 2008-09.
- Mid-month excursion: 9.30am Wednesday 17 October to Basalt Block for Wattle photography.
- SBML: Working bee to set up room at 2pm. Members to be reminded of market table, supper requirements, and encouraged to invite friends.
- The Secret Life of Bats, Lindy Lumsden, Burrumbeet Hall, 8pm Monday 29 October. RSVP Bernadette Cincotta.

Show and Tell

Peter Billing displayed a 1938 National Geographic article about a frog feeding on bats and snakes.

Field Reports

- Peter Dalman: Bird life on Lake Wendouree is fantastic with 50+ Freckled Duck, Pink-eared Duck, Black-winged Stilt and Black-tailed Native-hen.
- Greg Binns: Lake Burrumbeet has 1/3 of the area covered with a thin sheet of water. Many Black Swan, Black-winged Stilt, Australian Shelduck and Whiskered Tern. No cygnets present despite large numbers of nest 2 months ago and all other duck species absent.
- Elspeth Swan: Inverleigh Flora Reserve has good display of flowering spider and other orchids. Some orchids have been caged to protect from grazing kangaroos and rabbits and allow seed set.
- Tony Johns: Black Duck with 3 ducklings crossing Learmonth St. Grey Butcherbird at Mt Pleasant oval. Ring-tailed Possum scampering along insulated power line in Eyre St.
- Tony Wilson Black-shouldered Kite hovering on undeveloped block in York St.
- Belinda Taylor: Eastern Yellow Robin nesting 6 metres up in *Eucalyptus nichollii* at Haddon. Pallid Cuckoo heard daily for 2 weeks. Many frogs calling.
- Del Mc Donnell: Frogs calling along Creswick Creek in Creswick.
- Ken Hammond: Frogs calling at Pauls Wetland. Red Wattlebird and Magpie collecting meat scraps without becoming aggressive.
- Gavin Cerini: On a dam at Smythesdale – 4 Blue-billed Duck, 100 White ibis in nearby paddock.

Excursion arrangements

Sunday 14 Oct. Bull Gully Rock Wells & Battery Dam; Leader: Dalmans.

Syllabus Item

Michael Marmach. "The Pilbara". Michael used two projectors to show panoramic slides of the scenery and plants of Karajini NP in the Hammersley Ranges in the south of the Pilbara and Millstream-Chichester NP to the north. He had visited the area in 2006 after the area had received good rains. The flora had grown and flowered well. Peter Dalman thanked Michael for his talk and impressive slide presentation.

Supper

CALENDAR

November

- Fri 2 **Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture** Ian Morgan—Naturalist & Photographer *Birds of the Wimmera*
- Sun 4 Bamganie—the Cameron Property—Greg Binns

December

- Fri 7 Bernadette Cincotta—*Banrock Station & the Bilby Release Program*
- Sun 9 Bellarine Peninsula—Club Members

Lake Bird Update

There are several families of swans swimming on the lake. Let's hope the cygnets are large enough to fly when the lake dries up!

Have you noticed the family of Black Ducks—mother and seven ducklings—which is being 'supervised' by a male Wood Duck? Apparently the Wood Duck has been leading its little tribe proudly around the swan pond area for some time. There is no sign of Mr Black Duck—was there a divorce???



Committee

President Mr Peter Dalman
Vice-President Mr Greg Binns
Secretary Mr John Gregurke
Treasurer..... Mr Les Hanrahan

Miss Helen Burgess.....	Mrs Claire Dalman
Mrs Carol Hall	Mrs Val Hocking.....
Mr John Morrish	Ms Nina Netherway (editor).....

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Meetings are held at Ballarat Horticultural Centre, cnr. Gregory & Gillies Sts (VicRoads 254 F8) on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Depart from Ballarat Market Place (formerly Creswick Plaza) Creswick Rd., Ballarat (VicRoads 255 M10) at 9.30am unless otherwise specified.

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